

Arakwal National Park Cape Byron State Conservation Area

IUCN Green List of
Protected Areas



Cape Byron and Arakwal: excellence in protected area management

IUCN Green List of Protected Areas

The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Green List of Protected Areas (Green List) recognises excellence in protected area management.

Protected areas considered for the Green List meet internationally agreed standards for protected area management and demonstrate successful outcomes as a result of sound planning, equitable governance and effective management.

Arakwal National Park and Cape Byron State Conservation Area

Cape Byron is located 770 kilometres north of Sydney on the far north coast of NSW. It is the easternmost point of the Australian mainland.

Arakwal National Park and the adjoining Cape Byron State Conservation Area encompass 298 hectares of coastal heath, dunes, wetlands and rainforest. The parks are co-managed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and local Aboriginal Byron Bay Arakwal people, the traditional owners of the lands. The parks protect parts of Country important to the Arakwal people, to whom the reserve boundaries are considered artificial concepts.

Cape Byron State Conservation Area is an internationally renowned tourist destination for its scenic beauty, the iconic Cape Byron lighthouse and its surrounding heritage buildings.

Sound planning

Management of the reserves is guided by strategic plans including the Cape Byron State Conservation Area and Arakwal National Park plans of management, the Regional Pest Management Strategy and specific studies of species and communities that are of cultural significance or under threat. Strategic plans for conserving historic heritage assets include restoring them for tourist accommodation and development of long-term maintenance schedules.

Equitable governance

Both reserves are managed in an integrated way and are co-managed, meaning local Arakwal people, the community and businesses are involved in decision making. Arakwal was the first national park in Australia to be created under an Indigenous Land Use Agreement with the traditional owners.

Cape Byron State Conservation Area is managed by the Cape Byron Trust with equal representation by Arakwal people.



Effective management

Key threats including pests, weeds and risk of unplanned fires have been strategically managed, resulting in the restoration of large areas of coastal habitat, elimination of goats from Cape Byron headland and removal of coastal weeds such as bitou bush.

Remaining remnants of the endemic Bryon Bay Graminoid Clay Heath community are being restored. The needs of over 1.2 million visitors each year are balanced with protection of natural, Aboriginal and historic values. The lighthouse and beachside cottages are fully restored, and are available as tourist accommodation.

Successful outcomes

Arakwal National Park and Cape Byron State Conservation Area are considered exceptional because management:

- recognises and involves traditional owners in managing and working on their Country
- protects nationally significant biodiversity values
- conserves iconic historic heritage features such as Cape Byron lighthouse
- offers award-winning educational programs and holiday accommodation
- provides high quality recreational facilities for the local community and visitors.

Ecotourism and educational programs generate a sustainable source of funding for long-term management of the reserves.



Indigenous co-management

The Arakwal people have an established connection with the area around what is now known as Byron Bay that dates back at least 22,000 years. There is extensive evidence that Arakwal people harvested plants and animals for food, medicine and tools and used fire to manage vegetation. Significant Aboriginal sites and artefacts are also present, including three open camp/midden sites in Cape Byron State Conservation Area. Byron Bay Arakwal Elders were born and raised on Country and lived off the land.

Joint management has also resulted in significant positive benefits for the co-managers. Arakwal people have gained increased opportunities for spiritual and cultural connection to Country, employment, training and educational opportunities, while the National Parks and Wildlife Service has gained shared knowledge of local ecosystems and ways of managing them.



More information

To find out more, email npws.parkplanning@environment.nsw.gov.au or search for 'Cape Byron' or 'Arakwal' on nationalparks.nsw.gov.au or www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nationalparks/

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